Platform
Cooperativism
Consortium

SEX WORK, AUTONOMY, AND COOPERATIVE REFUSAL

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Abstract

Platform sex workers' cultural visibility and anti-work ethos reflect both heightened vulnerability and disruptive potential. As sexual labour is increasingly mediated through digital platforms, the struggle for sexual freedom is entangled with the fight for labour autonomy. Adult platforms provide advantages like client screening and digital safety measures, yet they also extract disproportionate profits and give rise to new risks, including deplatforming, doxing and image-based sexual abuse. Illegitimacy discourses are often applied to both sex workers and platform cooperativism (PCs), yet the autocratic nature of capitalist business models have been ideologically normalised. Drawing on interviews with six leading figures in sex tech innovation and advocacy, including PC tech developers and sex workers' rights activists, this report examines emerging solidaristic responses to platform domination. Situating this inquiry within Xenofeminist and workerist frameworks, the study argues that sex workers are strategically and ideologically well-placed to advance a model of platform cooperativism rooted in democratic governance, mutual aid and technological reinvention. In mapping the convergence of anti-work theory, legitimacy politics and platform cooperativism, the report envisions anti-work psyche, praxis and polity – a project of reversal which refuses capitalist alienation, data ownership and political-economic infrastructural power.

Introduction

Sex workers are central to the unfreedoms produced by the current global hegemonic order, as capitalism functions most intensively at the margins. Yet, their cultural visibility and anti-work spirit highlight significant disruptive potential across both local and global digital sexual economies. Here, the fight for sexual freedom is complicated by the struggle for labour freedom, as Cruz (2024, p. 501) puts it: 'sex workers are unfree workers and free sexual subjects.' The platformisation of sexual services reflects broader shifts in platform capitalism, whereby digital intermediaries now structure interactions between sex workers and clients (Srnicek, 2017). While offering benefits such as client screening and digital safeguards, platforms also introduce new harms, including deplatforming, doxing and image-based sexual abuse (Jones, 2020; Hardy & Barbagallo, 2021; West, 2024a).

Criminalisation and economic precarity deepen vulnerabilities, with online sex workers facing intensified risks due to criminalisation of offline work (Rand, 2019; Hardy & Barbagallo, 2021; Easterbrook-Smith, 2023). Although workers gain flexibility, this is constrained by restrictive terms of service and algorithmic prioritising that disproportionately impacts racialised workers, alongside high platform fees and intense competition (Jones, 2015; Hardy & Barbagallo, 2021; Rand & Stegeman, 2023; Stegeman, 2024). In response, sex workers have developed both online and offline strategies for resistance and mutual aid. Digital networks facilitate solidarity, activism and data privacy resistance, while offline spaces remain crucial for transformative social relations (NSWP, 2019; Jones, 2020; Hardy & Cruz, 2019; Hardy & Barbagallo, 2021; West, 2024b). Notably, the pandemic spurred worker-owned cooperative platforms in the UK, echoing earlier collective models among strippers (Gall, 2007; Barbagallo & Cruz, 2021; West, 2024b).

The promise of platform cooperatives (PCs) lies in decentralised, democratic governance (Scholz, 2023). Worker ownership offers a structural response to the exploitative design of gig economy firms, redistributing value and enabling possibilities for data democratisation (ibid; Scholz and Calzada, 2021). While the psychodynamics of cooperatives remain underexplored, their positive impact on

health and wellbeing have been noted. Zhu and Marjanovic (2021) and Le Lay and Lemozy (2023) emphasise the dangers of prioritising economic goals over wellbeing, as isolation and lack of control contribute to anxiety and depression. A collaborative economy, they argue, creates conditions for collective human growth. Their study of a French delivery coop highlights improved mental health outcomes through participation and mutual support (ibid). Wren (2020) affirms this dynamic.

Democratising technologies not designed for cooperation is complex, while scaling within a system built on competition and venture capital investment poses structural contradictions (Sandoval, 2020; Van Doorn, 2017). The Xenofeminist Manifesto urges us to remember that rapid revolution often fails to endure, so sustainable change requires a phased transition:

> Ours is a transformation of seeping, directed subsumption rather than rapid overthrow... a deliberate construction, seeking to submerge the white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy in a sea of procedures... to build a new world from the scraps" (Cuboniks, 2018, p. x).

This report takes a small step in that direction by drawing on interviews with six influential figures driving sex tech innovation and workers' rights by challenging platform power, enhancing safety and reappropriating technology as a tool for digital public good. Participants include; two platform cooperative developers, Emonie, founder of Honeycomb and Kate Flemming, founder of Horizontl; sex tech entrepreneur and advocate Madelaine Thomas (Image Angel); Dr. Raven Bowen, CEO of National Ugly Mugs; and European Sex Workers' Rights Alliance leaders Sabrina Sanchez and Yigit Aydinalp. Solidarity, as De Blasio and Selva (2019, p. 25) write, entails love, care, altruism, and 'grassroots cosmopolitanism,' offering a counter-ethic to capitalism's pathologies. Drawing from Xenofeminist and workerist discourses, I outline such a project by first exploring the intersections between anti-work and legitimacy theory. I then examine how sex workers are radically positioned to propagate platform cooperativism, through a framework which envisions anti-work as psyche, praxis and polity.

Literature Review

Anti-Work Theory

Anti-work theory positions the employment relationship as fundamentally harmful to human autonomy. Workers produce more value than they receive in wages, generating surplus value for capital (Marx, 1999). Meanwhile, value abstraction is increasingly valorised - that is, turned into something measurable and economically valuable - across wider areas of social and economic life through mechanisms of production, exchange and consumption (Tronti, 2019a). The absence of autonomy within production results in alienation of the spirit and from others (Marx, 1999). Documented effects on the body and mind, mental exhaustion, physical deterioration and stress, embody this Marxist critique (Black, 1986; Wilson, 2014; Srnicek & Williams, 2015). Meaningless consumerism fosters meaningless labour (Graeber, 2018), while authoritarian structures colonise life both inside and outside work (Lordon, 2014; Weeks, 2020).

Allier and McEachern (2024) argue that anti-work theory should inform industrial psychology, challenging managerialist models that rely on hierarchy and loyalty rather than collective empowerment. For anti-work theorists, autonomy is not just a means to productivity but an end in itself (ibid). Resistance emerges through both individual and collective strategies to regain control from management (Mumby, 2019). However, capital often responds by intensifying the employment relationship through policy influence and technological innovation (Tronti, 2019a; Barardi, 2009; Fisher, 2009).

Anti-work discourse has been prominent in sex work scholarship and activism (Babylon & Berg, 2021; Carlisle, 2021; Hester & Stardust, 2020). The adult online performer, Femi Babylon, views sex work as radical anti-work politics (Babylon & Berg, 2021), while Hester and Stardust (2020) note how sex worker movements challenge exploitative labour norms and resist neoliberal careerism. Carlisle (2021, p. 575) suggests sexual labour offers vital, often subjugated knowledge for community survival. Sex workers resist overwork, oppose ableist productivity norms

and advocate for shorter hours (Carlisle, 2021, p. 584). While recognising industry burnout, Carlisle highlights how support networks foster imaginative alternatives to mainstream employment models.

This elucidates the need to examine how anti-work discourses shape this sector's class composition. Workerist theory, rooted in autonomist Marxism, locates technological development in workers' struggles for autonomy (Tronti, 2019a). As capital automates and intensifies control to respond to workers' organisation, the contradiction between dead labour (tools and machines) and living labour deepens (Tronti, 2019). Valorisation, the increasingly abstract appropriation of value beyond the wage relation, reduces workers to appendages of machines, while expanding class antagonism. Resistance lies in workers' reappropriation or sabotage of dead labour (Panzieri, 1980; Negri, 1979).

This has been extended into post-digital critiques of data capitalism. Carmichael (2020) explores the emancipatory potential of counter-appropriation, drawing from workerist traditions and Alquati's analysis of surveillance. Alquati distinguishes between 'control information' (production metrics) and 'operational information' (workers' lived knowledge), highlighting how management captures the latter as quantifiable targets. Carmichael stresses that data is ideologically shaped and calls for 'counter-research' and refusal as necessary interventions. These discussions intersect with blockchain, data cooperatives and platform cooperatives, which create alternative possibilities for tech ownership.

An early articulation of anti-work theory emerges in the late 20th century discussions of Italian workerists, which they termed refusal of work. Tronti (2019a, p. 83) discussed refusal of capital's command over production and insubordination that subverts capital's tools from within. For Antonio Negri (1979, p. 86) refusal of work is 'self-valorisation… complete liberation of living labor within production and reproduction: it's the total utilization of wealth in the service of collective freedom.' Refusal of work also meant rejecting alienated labour, resisting capitalist exploitation and unleashing creative proletarian potential (ibid). In so doing, workerists'

emphasise autonomy, reappropriation, self-valorisation and de-alienation within post-capitalist innovation.

Xenofeminism (XF), developed by the Laboria Cuboniks collective, expands anti-work theory by blending cyberfeminism, materialist feminism and posthumanism, with a focus on the politics of reproduction (Hester, 2018). Helen Hester argues that XF aims to reappropriate rather than reject technology, deploying open-source software, autonomation and cybersecurity to redesign the world (Hester, 2018, p. 8). Technologies reflect existing power structures but, when seized for collective purposes, can facilitate gender-political transformation (ibid, pp. 9–10). The Xenofeminist Manifesto frames alienation as a catalyst for emancipation:

> "…XF seizes alienation as an impetus to generate new worlds… to cultivate the exercise of positive freedom — freedom to rather than simply freedom from — and urge feminists to redeploy existing technologies… {which} should no longer be… in the exclusive interests of capital…" (Cuboniks, 2018, pp. 0×01–0×06)

This reverse-engineering of infrastructure aligns with platform cooperativism, offering a means to reclaim power and reimagine work.

Legitimacy Theory

Sex work and platform cooperatives also intersect through legitimacy theory. Helen Rand (2019, p.) explains sex work is considered 'illegitimate' due to 'the social stigma… and the quasi-criminalised context.' Sex workers are illegitimate work and culture, according to the anti-trafficking and anti-porn feminist lobby, they are illegitimate workers and citizens according to the government and, to platforms, they're both illegitimate users and legitimate sources of exploitation as they're shadowbanned and deplatformed from social media and FinTech and productive of vast surplus value for adult platforms like Only Fans (ibid; West, 2024b). Rand (2019) notes that platformisation has increased legitimacy through traceable, tax-

able payments, yet the work remains informal and insecure. The moralisation of sex work shields adult-services platforms from scrutiny, enabling violent data appropriation like image-based sexual abuse, racialisation of workers and wage theft (West, 2024a; 2024b). Political focus remains on the morality of sexual services, rather than organisational practices.

The demand to recognise sex work as legitimate labour is part of a broader political project to secure workers' rights across other informal sectors (Hester and Stardust, 2020). The authors challenge claims that sex workers submit to the "dominant ethic" when they identify as workers. Instead, sex workers' rights movements critically engage with work-norms, rejecting careerism or long hours for low pay. This aligns with workerist arguments about the refusal of work, such as rejecting capital's command over time itself (Negri, 1979). Indeed, Hester and Stardust note the rescue industry of the anti-sex work lobby is more likely to celebrate the capitalist work ethic than sex workers' rights activists.

Some reject legitimising their labour as 'work' due to marginalisation (Babylon & Berg, 2021; Carlisle, 2021). Platform sex worker, Femi Babylon, critiques the capitalist work ethic, arguing that while all work is labour, not all labour is work (ibid). She views erotic labour as an act of liberation from capitalist exploitation and racialised oppression. Racialised and impoverished communities have long innovated and shared resources to survive outside formal employment, yet this is often overlooked or criminalised (Lobenstine & Bailey, 2014). Carlisle (2021, p. 575) suggests some sex workers resist legitimising their work as 'labour' because survival takes precedence over political engagement. However, union and activist movements see the claim to work as essential to decriminalisation and harm reduction. Indeed, illegitimacy has material impacts; criminalisation of buyers and pimps leads to evictions, incarceration, deteriorating police relations, child removal and violence. (Hester & Stardust, 2020; Vuolajärvi, 2022).

Platform cooperatives also face legitimacy challenges, criticised for lacking competitiveness and being vulnerable to market co-optation. Van Doorn (2017, p. 910) critiques the implicit alignment with Silicon Valley's 'technological solutionism'

and good life ideology which overlooks structural inequality. Similarly, Sandoval (2020) points to the 'de-generation thesis,' whereby cooperatives become subsumed by market logics or fail by adhering strictly to workers' interests. However, Sandoval acknowledges this is not universally valid given evidence of PC success. Indeed, platform cooperativism could be a first step toward reclaiming power over the digital economy, aligning with Xenofeminism's approach of gradual, 'seeping' transformation (Cuboniks, 2018). While they cannot entirely escape market logics, their democratic governance offers a potential tool for de-legitimating capitalism from within.

This requires a shift in the discourse of legitimacy towards organisational structures and economic modes of governance. Hearn (2011) argues that while the liberal-state is subject to a legitimacy process, capitalism is rarely viewed as ideology or authority and shielded from democracy (ibid). Moreover, the capitalist nation-state is interdependent, despite their cultural and political reckoning as autonomous entities (ibid). Hence, the state's legitimacy is measured by its capacity to harness capitalism as a natural and unpredictable force rather than an ideological system run by corporate oligarchs, to whom governments worldwide have accrued vast debt (ibid; Streeck, 2011). Hearn argues such unaccountable legitimacy relies on authority, social hierarchies and ideological belief systems (ibid). This enables manipulation of markets, democracy and public power.

Drawing on workerist theory of class composition, which refers to the agitation and collective self-organisation of the working class within production and socially reproductive settings, my PhD thesis explored how the collective organisation of 'capital composition' enables ideological and super-structural governance over the economic, political and cultural terrain. Their legitimacy is maintained through diffuse, transnational networks and hyper-agency, with billionaires acting as 'policy entrepreneurs' and using philanthropy to advance their interests (Papin & Beauregard, 2023). Such activities are depoliticised, while the structural inequalities created by capitalism are presented as only solvable through data and billionaire intervention (ibid). This reflects an autocratic logic of unaccountable rule, where wealth equates to sovereign decision-making.

Billionaires shape governance structures through ownership and influence over business models, policy, academia, NGOs, think tanks, philanthropy and the mass media (Eikenberry, 2011; Chung, 2021; Papin & Beauregard, 2023; Bond, 2025). Platforms exert direct state influence via lobbying, campaign financing and political action committees (PAC). For instance, Elon Musk helped organise the American Super PAC to drive techno-libertarian deregulation, tax breaks and Trump's second presidential campaign (Mahler, Mac & Schleifer, 2024). This autocratic model consolidates elite power while marginalising democratic participation. This supports Hearn's (2011) argument that there is no autonomy of state and capital, yet the burdens of authority and legitimacy fall primarily on the state and its citizens.

This is central to Tronti's (2019b; 2020) vision of autonomy of the political: the state must free itself from capital's domination, and civil society must remain autonomous from formal politics. Yet platform cooperativism envisions autonomy not just in the political realm, but within the economic structuring of work. By collectively building autonomous alternatives, the autocratic autonomy of capital composition faces internal decomposition (Negri, 1979). This occurs as class struggle is broken down and economically restructured (Mohandesi 2013). This illuminates the need for an anti-work project of refusal that de-legitimises the autocratic autonomy of capital composition, through refusal of alienation, self-valorisation and reappropriation of platform tendencies. Within this context, I develop three interrelated analytical anti-work axes: psyche, praxis and polity.

Method

This report draws on multi-method PhD fieldwork, including critical discourse analysis of policy documents, video diaries, participant observation of adult-services platforms and sex worker events, alongside numerous in-depth interviews with online performers and members of the Sex Workers' Union UK (SWU) between July 2022 and July 2023. Primarily, this report is based on a small qualitative study conducted during a research fellowship with the Institute for the Cooperative Digital Economy. Semi-structured interviews were carried out online between May-October 2024, with six inspirational sex tech innovators and sex

workers' rights advocates. They were chosen based on their efforts to challenge capitalist structures, make sex work safer and reappropriate technology for digital public good.

This includes two tech developers and founders of platform cooperatives.

1. Emonie, a tech developer building an online content creator PC called Honeycomb.
2. Kate Flemming is developing a PC for full-services workers called Horizontl.
3. Madelaine Thomas, a major sex workers' rights advocate in the UK and founder of a sex tech innovation company Image Angel
4. Dr. Raven Bowen, CEO of National Ugly Mugs, an essential UK-based charity which is repurposing technology to protect sex workers.
5. Sabrina Sanchez, Director European Sex Workers' Rights Alliance, and digital rights officer Yigit Aydinalp.

Interviews were coded and analysed in Nvivo using flexible grounded theory, which allows participant-driven themes emerge, alongside a post-inquiry literature review (Charmaz, 2014; 2015).

Anti-Work Psyche

Marx (1999) described alienation as dehumanising process which estranges workers from 1) their spirit, 2) other workers; 2) the product of labour and 4) the act of production. Alienation can be seen primarily as a process of psychic harm, which occurs as autonomy and human bonds are violated. Culturally, the capitalist work ethic is more likely to be worshipped than condemned, with publications like Fortune 100 offered as bibles of billionaire triumph rather than emblems of bourgeois exploitation. Platform capitalists are often hailed as 'disruptive market entrants with winner-take-all ambitions' whose "radical" innovation is galvanised by the entrepreneurial mindset of a liberal market economy (Rahman and Thelen, 2019, pp. 189/190).

Anti-work psyche refuses the alienation driven by autocratic platform tendencies by reclaiming disruption and innovation. The intrinsically disruptive and innovative anti-work psyche within the sex work community emerged in the discourse of Sabrina Sanchez, director of the European Sex Workers' Rights Alliance, and Emonie, founder and tech innovator of the adult-services platform Honeycomb that is currently in development with the aim of to creating a democratic version of OnlyFans:

> Sabrina: Many of us in the movement have a left leaning mentality. Many of us are anti-capitalist, we even move in the spectrum of anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-unionist thought…. we're usually more progressive than the left parties. For me, that's a big problem, because we should be united against fascism.

> Emonie: Before anything sex work related, I was involved in anarchist projects… most of my friends were anarchists. I was having a lot of trouble at that time and the only community support I had was through that. I felt this intense need to equalise the economic disparities that were leading to me being on and off the street. I wasn't on drugs, I just wasn't the ideal employee where I lived… when I did find work, it was typically not work that anyone wanted to do. I wanted to see a world where somebody who might not be the most desirable employee could still have a good life. I saw Anarcho-syndicalism projects as a way to move towards that. We don't need to have a revolution to transform this economy…. even if Amazon is still dominating everything, we can form these little sectors where we do have that autonomy and dignity…

These participants suggests that marginalisation within capitalism can spark revolutionary consciousness. Not being an 'ideal' employee or political subject often masks deeper exclusions based on physical or cognitive difference. During my PhD fieldwork, Sex Workers' Union representatives and other participants within the community expressed high rates of neurodivergence or other disabilities. Yet, as Bell Hooks' (1999) infamously explained, life on the margins produces an opposi-

tional gaze, cultivated by knowledge of both centre and margin, politics and structural poverty. This engenders radical anti-work psyche in the sex work movement. Anarcho-syndicalists believe workers should organise in autonomous, self-managed unions to challenge oppressive hierarchies in the capitalist-state through co-operation and mutual aid.

Indeed, xenofeminist discourses understands alienation as a catalyst for creating new possibilities (Cuboniks, 2018). Alienation, therefore, can trigger innovation. Once Emonie developed the software development skills, her anti-work psyche was driven into cooperative innovation of the online sex industry. She points out that anarchist politics aren't necessary to incentivise PC membership; rather, the promise of equality and autonomy can be motivation enough. Workers' autonomy is innovation in itself, given the unethical and exploitative nature of adult platform governance.

The decision to build Honeycomb also emerged from dismissal of sex workers' innovation:

> Emonie: When I started learning how to write software, I wanted to find a way to take that anarchist philosophy and apply it to the online world… We were getting chased from platform to platform… we were getting chased off of Tumblr, where a lot of us were really established… Even OnlyFans… it was very clear the only stable place to work would be one governed by us which could be beautifully democratic. We were already putting all this energy into building our followers…. We wouldn't chase ourselves off!

As Emonie suggests, sex workers are often banned from the platforms they make relevant. This has been noted by Hardy and Barbagallo (2021), who suggest platforms align with the moral crusade against sex workers after exploiting their labour. OnlyFans, for instance, wasn't intended to be a sexual marketplace. Yet sex tech innovation within the community is often overlooked. Figure One shows a screengrab of the Honeycomb platform cooperative currently in development,

highlighting the community's artistic innovation which is also often overlooked despite significant contributions to culture and performance art.

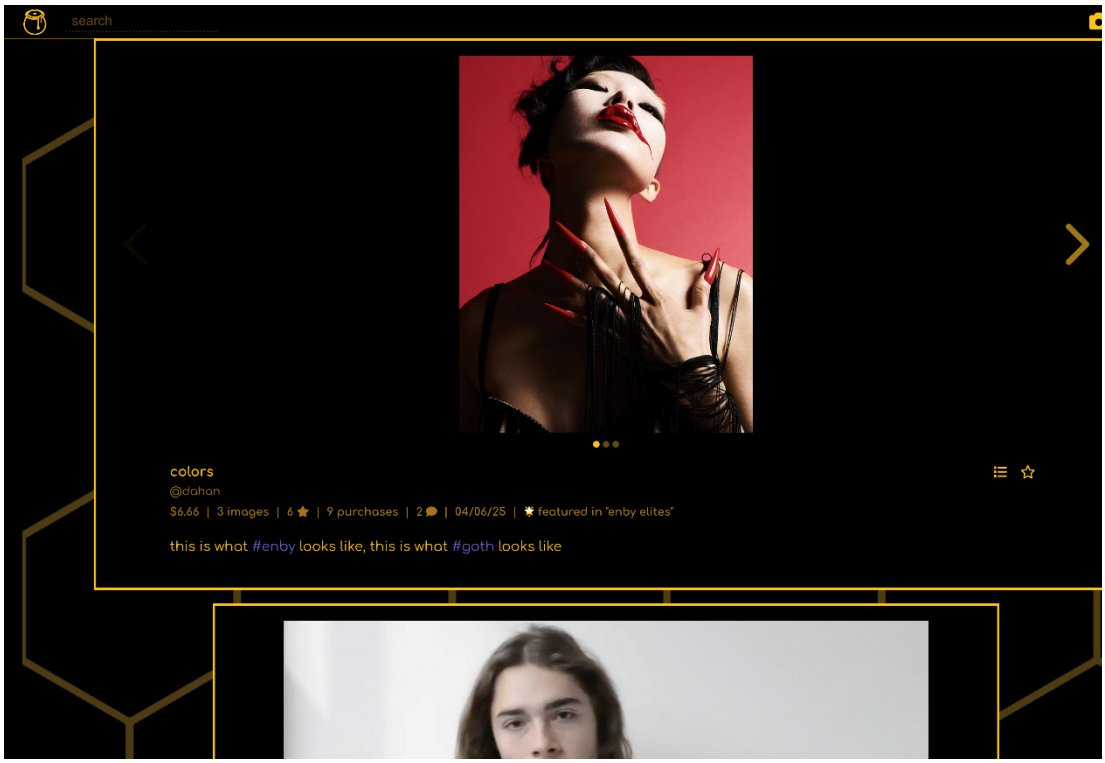

search
colors
@dahan
$6.66 | 3 images | 6 | 9 purchases | 2 | 04/06/25 | featured in "enby elites"
this is what #enby looks like, this is what #goth looks like

Figure 1: Screenshot of Honeycomb (Credit: Honeycomb, 2026)

Sex workers also innovate to challenge this context. Madelaine is a prominent online sex work activist in the UK and founder of Thornhill Digital, a company that develops technology for harm reduction alongside ethical consultancy services. This experience led her to found a second start-up tech company, Image Angel, which offers forensic watermarking technology to trace and prevent image-based sexual abuse on adult-services platforms. The non-consensual sharing of intimate images or videos is a criminal act in the UK, and many other countries. It is not only rife within sex work but has so far been overlooked by platform owners, who enable misogynistic consumer behaviour by not setting boundaries or safety policies, and by engaging harmful practices themselves. Madelaine identified a need for worker-led innovation, which understands digital sex workers as the experts of

their craft. If labour platforms produce psychological harm for workers, solutions lie within the knowledge of this experience.

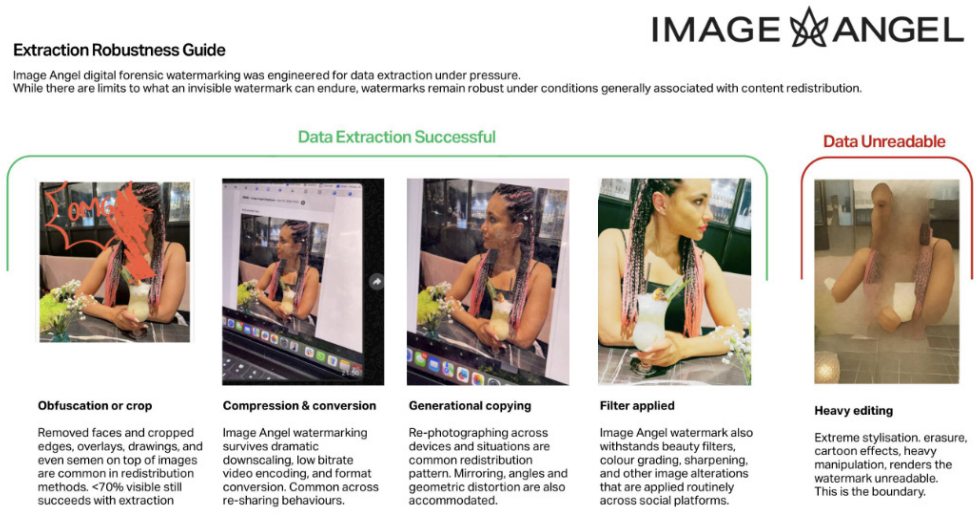


IMAGE ANGEL
Extraction Robustness Guide
Image Angel digital forensic watermarking was engineered for data extraction under pressure.
While there are limits to what an invisible watermark can endure, watermarks remain robust under conditions generally associated with content redistribution.
Data Extraction Successful
Data Unreadable
Obfuscation or crop
Removed faces and cropped edges, overlays, drawings, and even semen on top of images are common in redistribution methods. <70% visible still succeeds with extraction
Compression & conversion
Image Angel watermarking survives dramatic downscaling, low bitrate video encoding, and format conversion. Common across re-sharing behaviours.
Generational copying
Re-photographing across devices and situations are common redistribution pattern. Mirroring, angles and geometric distortion are also accommodated.
Filter applied
Image Angel watermark also withstands beauty filters, colour grading, sharpening, and other image alterations that are applied routinely across social platforms.
Heavy editing
Extreme stylisation. erasure, cartoon effects, heavy manipulation, renders the watermark unreadable. This is the boundary.

Figure 2: Image Angel's Technology in Action (Credit: Image Angel, 2026)

Madelaine also demonstrates anti-work psyche, by forcing capitalist actors to listen to the community. Yet ethical consultancy services and tech innovation cannot divorce platforms from shareholder authority. Shareholders maintain autocratic autonomy over governance structures, by driving productivity at the expense of workers' wellbeing (Gelter, 2009.). Profit, and the value society places on wealth regardless of workers' rights, legitimises the psychic harms produced by capital's legal and ideological dominion over time, labour-power and human creativity. The project of refusal therefore 'seizes alienation,' by creating a supportive environment for innovation that meets the needs of community stakeholders (Cubonicks, 2018, pp. 0×01–0×06).

Kate Flemming is the director of IDEMS, a company which harnesses mathematical sciences and tech innovation to aid in international development. She is also the founder of Horizontl, a platform cooperative in development for full-service sex workers. Kate explains co-design of platforms can be challenging without technological expertise. While sex tech innovators exist, digital skills gaps remain

a barrier to participatory innovation. Ivy league or Rusell Group higher education may reproduce capital composition; however, the humanities and social sciences are also a critical space of anti-work consciousness. One way to harness bottom-up innovation could be to establish platform cooperative universities, which act as an alternative to profit-incentivising institutions like MIT. Such universities could recruit software engineers interested in legitimate social impact and offer scholarships to train service workers. They could structure departments by sector, attract platform cooperative funding and support service workers through technical training and participatory design.

Another method of delegitimising the psychological damage caused by platforms could be through clinical trials, if PC development became more widely understood as a public health intervention. This important idea was put forward by Kate Flemming, who has shifted in this direction after struggling to capture venture capital investment:

> Kate: At IDEMs we run clinical research trials around tech to make sure that it's not introducing new harms and show evidence of the positive intervention. So, I'm building out my model for running Horizontl in small trials to gather clinical evidence that it's a harm reducing intervention… So, rather than investing in this sex worker tool, it becomes they're investing in harms and a technical innovation company that works on grand challenges that need an intervention.

Kate offers an innovative solution to the reality of sex work stigma, which remains a significant barrier to attracting funding for a platform cooperative. While Emonie seeks to bypass the need for VCs by building the platform herself, Kate offers another solution which could draw attention to platform cooperatives more broadly as a public health intervention.

Kate questioned how such a model could empirically validate harms. One approach could involve using the benchmarking practices established by the Fairwork Foundation as a comparative framework. Fairwork rates labour platforms based on five

key principles: Fair Pay, Fair conditions, Fair Contracts, Fair Management and Fair Representation, alongside metrics for Fairwork AI (Graham et al., 2020; Cant et al., 2023). Fair conditions include protective measures, alongside health and safety, as key markers – which can speak to workers' psychological wellbeing. 'Fair Management' can incorporate key PC principles, such as democratic member participation, to examine the mental health impacts of democratic autonomy at work. The PC could be quantitatively scored against existing adult-services platforms, based on these metrics, alongside the gathering of qualitative data to assess experiences.

Another measure of harm reduction could be the implementation of National Ugly Mugs (NUM) safety tools. NUM is a UK-based charity seeking justice and protection for sex workers, who face violence and stigma-based barriers to reporting due to criminalisation. NUM has developed a digital alert system for dangerous clients, participatory research practices and trained support staff. I interviewed the director of NUM, Dr. Raven Bowen, for this research project. Dr. Bowen explained NUM's services are now extending across borders, as organisations in Europe look to NUM to develop similar services. Raven points out that austerity and service cuts fall hard on the sex work community, which already suffers from systemic poverty and intersectional inequalities related to racialisation, disability and migration.

Raven describes the many layers of NUM's protective services:

> Raven: NUM checker is a screening tool which sex workers use to check license plates, profile names, emails and phone numbers to get more information and make decisions about whether they engage with that {client} or not…. if the data hits on any of those points they get to see the alerts and harms associated with that individual… We provide victim support, sexual violence advisors and some services and workshops when people are in contemplative stages of career change. We have a racial justice project that has a series of policy documents and a unique reporting form for people to report violence perpetrated by those in public trust, including police and doctors. Our mandate is to end all forms of violence… because of the risks

> associated with being outed, stigmatised people often choose more discrete options for accessing support.

Raven's narrative exposes the many harms which criminalisation, institutional violence and absent labour protections produce. NUM tools could be implemented into a cooperative clinical trial, to assess the efficacy of these features when integrated into a platform. When asked if these features could become part of a platform coop, Raven responded:

> Raven: I can definitely have a conversation about some of those services being subsumed within a cooperative platform… The longer-term goal is for NUM not to exist, right? We exist because there is a need to mediate the relationship between sex workers and public services and community services that are designed to support individuals. Sex workers are either mistreated or denied access to things and seen as undeserving or blamed for the victimisation they experience…. particularly more marginalised people like migrant sex workers, racialised sex workers, disabled sex workers... Some of the structural issues like forced labour and survival sex work would remedy themselves if we dealt with feminised poverty, homelessness, health and mental health.

A PC clinical trial could draw on evidence about harm reduction produced by NUM services, as justification for this intervention. NUM's services could indeed be adopted by a sex work PC, or run by NUM, as an additional arm of the business that the PC doesn't profit off. However, as Raven points out, a platform cooperative is not a panacea for the wider structural poverty engendered by neoliberal austerity. The state's failure to regulate, adequately tax, and maintain autonomy from capital composition contributes directly to these conditions. This is why anti-work politics must extend to the reappropriation of data infrastructures, as a means to redistribute wealth more equitably.

Anti-Work Praxis

Data appropriation is praxis designed by capital and executed by dead labour. That is, companies design algorithmic systems to capture data in ways that serve profit or compliance regulations, and those systems run automatically without ongoing human decision-making. Anti-work praxis can be rooted in the reappropriation of data infrastructure, to delegitimise processes of valorisation. As foundational workerist Negri (1979, pp.82-83) stresses "superstructural" effects, 'independence' and 'self-reliance' are available through 'proletarian reappropriation' and 'invention-power.' This is critical to PC research, which has focussed on data coops, smart contracts, blockchain payment infrastructure and collective governance of personal data (Scholz and Calzada, 2021; Bühler et al., 2023). These efforts critically resist data colonialism (ibid).

Although data appropriation is widely critiqued in academia, access to education about its harms remains a privilege. However, the sex work community is especially vocal about data privacy and biometric surveillance practices, given the risks of tracking and storing information about criminalised populations (NSWP, 2019). In this sense, sex workers are radically positioned to be motivated to join a PC by data privacy and ownership. The European Sex Workers' Rights Alliance (ESWA) is a grassroots organisation representing the interests of over 100 organisations in 30 countries across Europe and Central Asia. Yigit Aydin, ESWA's digital rights officer, explains how data protection is a critical feature of their work:

> Yigit: Our work is deeply rooted in data protection and privacy for sex workers. We've done lots of research with sex workers on this and we also work with European digital rights organisations.
>
> Sabrina: I would like to see full control of our material, our adds, our profiles, our everything! Safety on data storage is the biggest concern of everybody… like I don't want to be doxed. I don't want to be outed. I don't want the problems associated with people knowing that you are a sex worker.

Doxing is the exposure of sex workers' personal information to stalk them or compromise their anonymity, which intensifies concerns around privacy and safety. Regaining control over the photos and clips they produce for adult platforms is also key, as such erotic labour can be appropriated by platforms and consumers and shared without consent. Yigit and Sabrina questioned how data privacy would be upheld in a PC, especially as it would need to adhere to the same regulations regarding ID verification that commercial platforms do. Such databases are a significant concern for those policed across borders, housing, social and financial technology services. Online sex workers are still routinely ejected from social media and fintech despite their work being legal. Platforms scan both faces and personal documents like passports. Such information can be shared between platforms and states, further entrenching sex workers into a global bio-technological policing apparatus.

Kate Flemming pointed out current monolithic adult-services platforms, like AdultWork, are more concerned with protecting consumer identity:

> Kate: AdultWork makes it possible for men to buy sex anonymously via NeoSurf. You can pay for a Neo Surf voucher, which is completely anonymous, then you use this voucher online to pay for sex work. So, clients can hide their identity, but sex workers have to jump through a million hoops to access their money. They have to give away every bit of privacy they've ever had to use AdultWork, which is bullshit. I'm convinced AdultWork has a backdoor to the Home Office. It must be the only reason they're allowed to get away with these things, because they're just handing over sex workers' data.

Such negligence towards worker privacy while actively protecting client anonymity is characteristic of a business model which self-servingly prioritises the needs of consumers (Rahman and Thelen, 2019). During my PhD fieldwork, some participants explained they only use AdultWork for online services, as it pins the location of full-service workers on their profile – an extremely dangerous practice for criminalised and highly stigmatised people within their communities.

In this context. platform cooperatives must comply with government regulations while ensuring strict mechanisms for online identity protection. This requires ethical innovation within data science, focused on user protection. Kate is building privacy-focused full-stack online identity innovation to protect user privacy on Horizontl, while Emonie is exploring end-to-end encryption on Honeycomb. A sex work PC would grant ownership over data, preventing third-party surveillance or profit-driven sharing. This includes their multi-media erotic content, which is often exploited by adult-services firms.

As noted, a significant issue on adult platforms is image-based sexual abuse (IBSA). I have argued elsewhere that sex workers are often excluded from cultural and legislative discussions of this crime (West, 2024a). Platforms fail to protect performers from IBSA and even profit from distributing stolen content without consent. This leads to content going viral on free sites, subjecting workers to harassment and exposure. After experiencing IBSA trauma and growing frustrated with platform and government inaction, Madelaine demonstrates Xenofeminist rebellion by reappropriating tech to protect her community. Despite having no background in software development, Madelaine spent many late nights reading about technology, searching for a solution in dense technical documents "way above my paygrade." Eventually, she innovated radical anti-work praxis:

> Madelaine: I've called it Image Angel. It's an artificial intelligence technology that creates an imperceptible watermark, totally invisible to the human eye, by embedding data from the buyer into that image or content you sell. It does that in a way that can never be cropped or adjusted out, so even if you took a screenshot or video of the image, whatever you do, it has your data embedded into it… I didn't create the technology, I just moulded it, so it works specifically for this purpose. You can even use it with WhatsApp and Telegram. … The buyer doesn't own the image or copyright, they don't own the rights to sell it or send it anywhere, but they're the guardian. And to prove that there's this invisible Angel wing embedded into the content. If you don't look after it, you'll be in trouble because it's got your data in it.

Madelaine's coopting of AI for common ends shows not only how reappropriation of data is anti-work praxis, but also how this community deserves to be recognised for its innovation. Madelaine's efforts are indeed increasingly being recognised by the media and in the tech space, having recently featured in a BBC documentary (Bryan, 2025) and received Rising Star of the Year in the Wales Technology Awards 2025 (Stephens, 2025).

Figure 3: Image Angel Founder, Madelaine Thomas, speaking on stage at the 2025 EntreConf Awards, which celebrate entrepreneurial excellence (Credit: EntreConf.webp)

The pre-existing availability of this technology highlights how neglected this sector is, with adult platform tech entrepreneurs unwilling to implement necessary protections. While Image Angel is beginning to ensure consumers can no longer engage in, or profit from, IBSA, adult-services platforms that don't adopt this technology will be exposed as negligent. Moreover, they will increasingly struggle to profit from non-consensual appropriation of workers' data. This undermines the autocratic power of platforms, whose illegal and psychologically harmful contribution to IBSA can now be held to account. A sex work PC can adopt this tech-

nology, ensuring providers are safer and perpetrators are caught. This also forces consumers to follow ethical consumption practices – spotlighting how technology can even delegitimise misogynistic practices when appropriated for public good.

Reappropriating Financial Services

Reappropriating platform payment systems engineers the project of reversal towards surplus value - that is, the discrepancy between the value produced by workers and wages they receive, as capitalist actors (business owners, shareholders, CEOs) extract vast profit. Sex workers express great dissatisfaction about the platform facilitation fees deducted from wages, which range from 20%-66%. Percentages vary; OnlyFans (20%); Adult-Work (30%+); Chaturbate (40-50%). This fee is either extracted from live-streams per-minute, per-task for multimedia content and through monthly subscription-based models. A PC would enable workers to receive a much higher proportion of their income, while any surplus could be directed back into the platform and workers' benefits. This offers critical protection to a community which reports high rates of disability and/or caring responsibilities.

Reappropriating financial data infrastructure also constitutes radical anti-work praxis. Blockchain-based cooperative models offer ownership over financial data and severance of third-party payment intermediaries (Scholz and Calzada, 2021). In theory, this could protect sex workers from FinTech exclusion, as carceral legislation makes them targets of algorithmic data tracking (Muneeza, Arshad, & Arifin, 2018; Stardust et al., 2023).

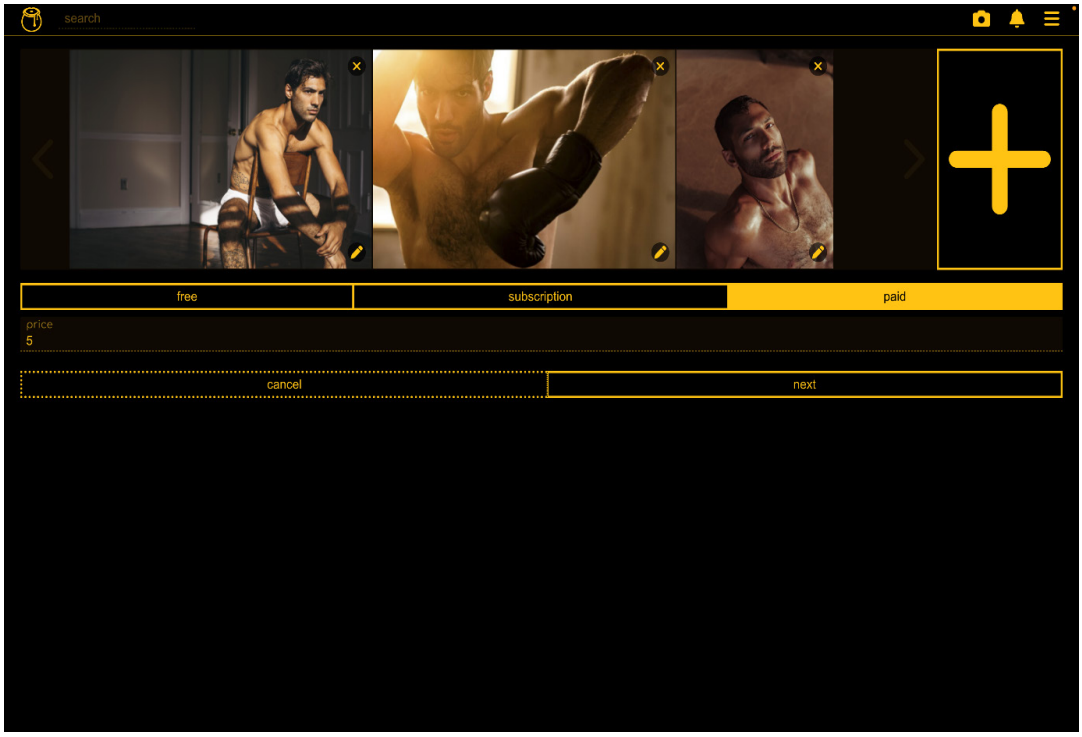


Figure 4: Honeycomb Payment Structure (Credit: Honeycomb, 2026)

The founders of Honeycomb and Horizontl, however, both explained why they ultimately decided blockchain wasn't right for an adult-services PC:

> Emonie: The consensus was that most people didn't have blockchain accounts or weren't familiar enough with it, so it would end up being a huge barrier to usage both for the content creators and consumers. We decided to work with payment gateways which means more intense moderation, but we would want to do regardless. I have experience building those technologies, but most people aren't that bought into it unless they're in that world already. We want as little friction as possible because it's going to be hard for communities to buy into a new platform… They might be concerned their fanbase won't want to use blockchain and they'll lose their clients.

Emonie makes an important point about blockchain-based models in general. Awareness is lacking, while fears about consumer impacts outweighed the allure of bypassing FinTech structures. This suggests that perceived illegitimacy of new tech can be a barrier to scalability.

Kate believes it's crucial to provide a way to prove exploitation isn't happening without needing to disclose personal data, like bank accounts, which can be frozen due to involvement in full-service sex work. If a PC can clearly demonstrate that participants are not trafficked, this could bolster advocacy efforts. Enabling individuals to signal their consent without revealing their identity would challenge the biased assumption that sex work is inherently linked to organised crime (Bernstein, 2007; Vuolajärvi, 2022; West, 2024b). Kate stresses it's possible to conduct real-time audits to identify unusual behaviours without violating privacy. Like Emonie, she ended up rejecting blockchain for Horizontl, despite researching it extensively:

> Kate: Blockchain has very distinct use cases where you want proof of an immutable history. You do not want an immutable transaction history in sex work. You want to be forgotten and disappear. Sarah, my head of privacy and this amazing cryptographer, proved Bitcoin is not anonymous. You can piece data together and figure out who's made those transactions. I'm much more interested in E-CASH… which can replicate traits of cash online but the moment you need to get money out of the system then you have to interact with traditional banking where you have no privacy. I found myself thinking toward community banking at the cooperative level… the bank is managing auditing and taking on risk, so you can create a system that is taking accountability and ownership.

Kate envisions financial inclusion without blockchain, through E-Cash and cooperative banks. While the former must cede to centralised authority, a cooperative bank is a potentially transformative solution. Instead of sex workers shouldering this responsibility alone, a collective cooperative bank for platform workers could be set up, enabling shared governance and cross-sector collectivisation. Nergi ar-

gued self-valorisation emerges as workers carve out spaces liberated from domination with alternative practices and structures (Cleaver, 1992). Indeed, disruption of financial capital and surveillance could drive valorisation towards ethical data praxis.

Reappropriating Social Media

Anti-work praxis can also be realised through the reappropriation of social networks, which restrict sex workers' ability to participate in online communities and safely advertise services. Emonie describes a tagging system on Honeycomb that enhances user interaction with individual posts and preferences. Users can create and add hashtags to specific lists to curate content. This encourages "organic discoverability," as users can follow these lists to find similar interests, while building community among buyers and other service providers who can discover and support each other. This can be seen in Figure Five.

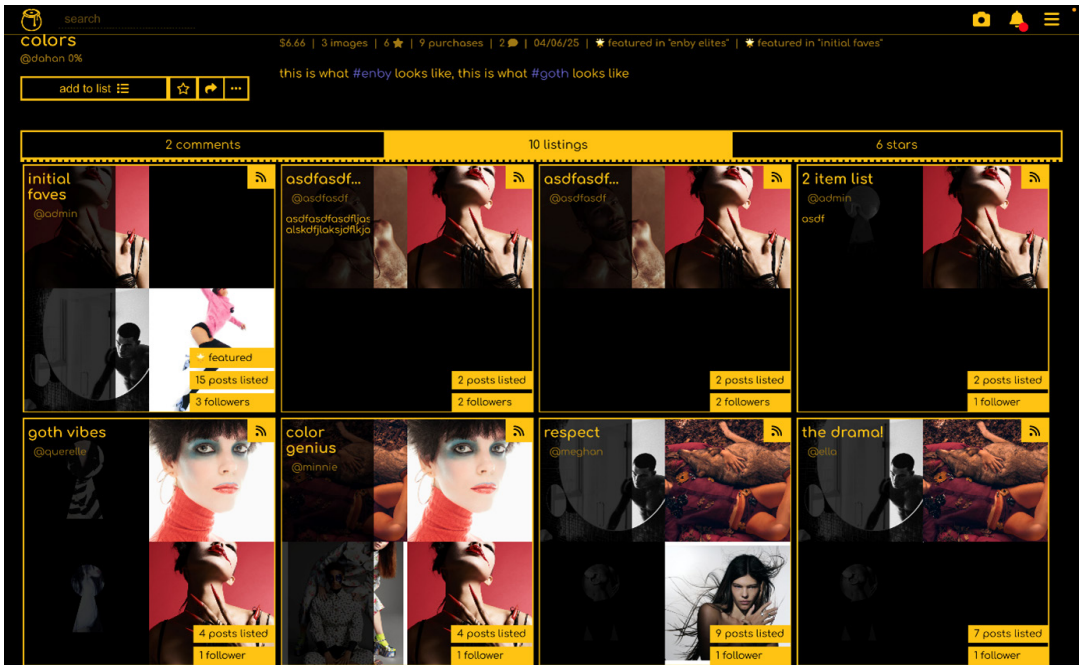


Figure 5: Honeycomb Social Network Image (Credit: Honeycomb, 2026)

Adult platforms don't usually build collaboration into the digital infrastructure or make advertising and network-building easy for workers. In fact, appropriation of workers' unpaid social media labour is one way that adult platforms reduce operational costs. My PhD participants expressed that a vast proportion of their productive activity was spent on advertising. Such commodification of time itself can be reduced by building advertising and networking into the PC.

Emonie explained this feature was what most workers were asking for during community meetings. Such efforts reinforce anti-work psyche by reducing capital's command over time:

> Emonie: We could describe Honeycomb as a social network. It has the basics: anyone can create an account, you can follow other users, their content will appear in an infinite scrolling feed, and you can discover new content by clicking on tags or searching for keywords. It also allows creators to effectively "retweet" content through their curated lists. Once we have a dm'ing system, we›ll have all the basic features of a social network.

This ability to follow and build community with other sex workers can be seen in Figure Six and Figure Seven.

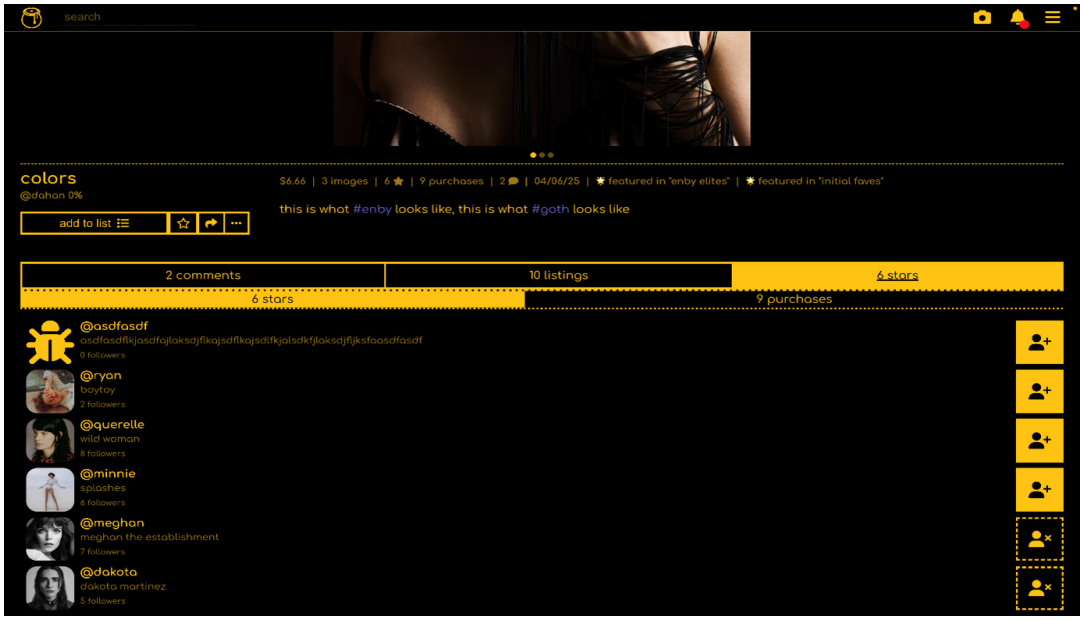
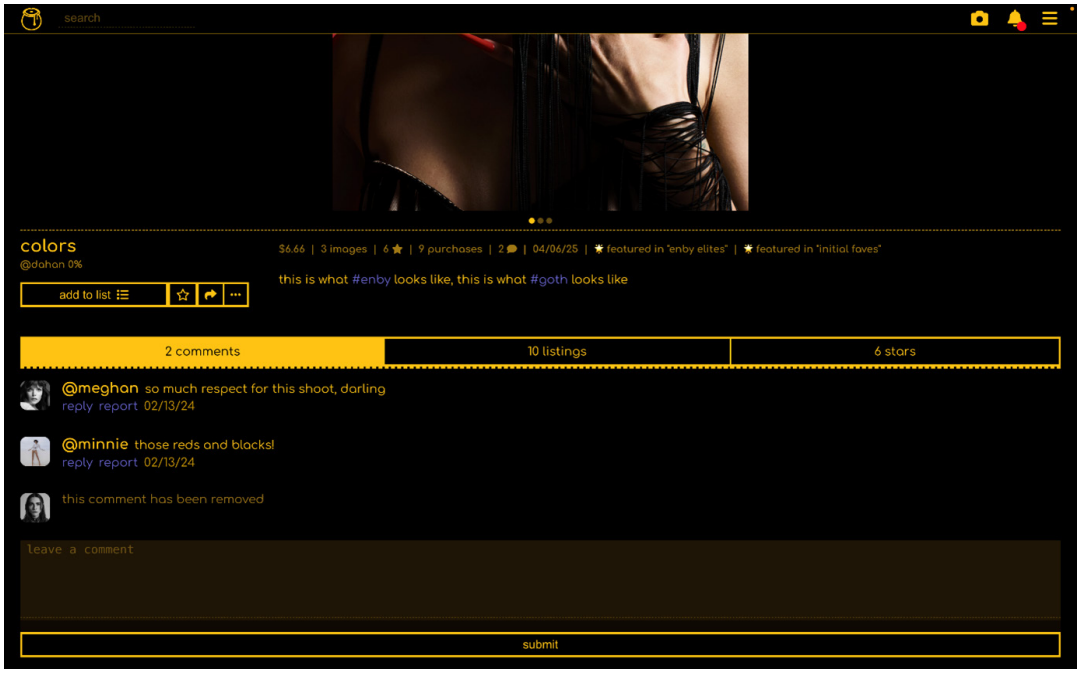


Figure 6: Honeycomb Followers and Lists (Credit: Honeycomb, 2026)


search
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add to list
$6.66 | 3 images | 6 ★ | 9 purchases | 2 💬 | 04/06/25 | featured in "enby elites" | featured in "initial faves"
this is what #enby looks like, this is what #goth looks like
2 comments
10 listings
6 stars
@meghan so much respect for this shoot, darling
reply report 02/13/24
@minnie those reds and blacks!
reply report 02/13/24
this comment has been removed
leave a comment
submit
Figure 7: Honeycomb Social Network Interactions (Credit: Honeycomb, 2026)

Emonie demonstrates radical anti-work praxis by building a social network that is rooted in the notion of a digital common. This enables workers to support one another, build community and collectivise – something that is generally restricted on adult-services sites, while social media platforms shadowban, deplatform and erase them from community participation. Moreover, their data bodies cannot be appropriated and traded as commodities. Worker-owned social networks offer self-valorisation by shifting profit incentives to community well-being, reduced hours and data ownership, while delegitimising harmful platform praxis. This is evident in the establishment of Switter, an alternative sex work–friendly social networking platform to Twitter (Memorial for Switter, n.d.,). A collective of technologists and sex workers called Assembly Four in Australia launched this platform is 2018 in response to increasing deplatforming of sex workers on mainstream platforms.

Built on the open-source Mastodon software it grew rapidly, attracting hundreds of thousands of users and facilitating community building, client screening and harm-reduction practices. Switter offered a rare digital space governed by moderation policies attentive to the needs and safety of sex workers. However, the platform shutdown in March 2022 due to global legislative constraints targeting sexual content and LGBTQIA+ communities (Memorial for Switter, n.d.,). These developments created significant legal and infrastructural risks which made the continued operation of Switter untenable, despite significant popularity 'at the time of closure,' including being the '3rd biggest Mastodon instance in the fediverse,' with '435,490 users, 9,193,510 toots (tweets), 8,625,422 replies, 16,685,010 reblogs (retweets)' and '4,941,056 favourites' (ibid).

These figures make evident how a cooperative social network like Honeycomb could meet rapid success, answering a need for online spaces which do not police sex workers' data bodies. Allowing sex workers to have their own social networks, which are regulated ethically by age verification laws, can also reduce online safety critique related to children's exposure to pornography (Blake, 2019). Switter's widespread adoption is evident in the data, yet, as is common in this industry, punitive legislation remains a barrier to autonomy. Decriminalisation is therefore

essential. Workers' autonomy also depends upon delegitimising autocratic governance structures.

Anti-Work Polity

Platforms act as centralised, autocratic authorities, using their class composition as a governing force while undermining trade unions and democratic participation. First, network effects turn user growth into political power. As more users join a platform, its utility and influence grow (Srnicek, 2017), creating structural impacts across markets and social relations (Hodson, McMeekin and Lockhart, 2024.). Like state politics, influence scales with membership. Politics, activism and participation are indeed increasingly embedded within platform-controlled networks (Crossley, 2008; Anduiza et al., 2014). Second, platforms shape democracy through lobbying, media monopolies and NGOs, forming consumer-investor and state-capital coalitions that legitimise their dominance and weaken labour protections (Rahman and Thelen, 2019; Bond, 2025). Third, venture-scalability enables access to extensive funding so that gig economy platforms can grow, even if operating at a loss (Srnicek, 2017). Venture capitalists play an extremely important role in the governance of the global economy, as shareholders develop significant wealth accumulation and market influence.

Anti-work polity involves re-appropriating network effects and venture scalability, while enhancing the political autonomy and self-governance of civil society. This project of refusal is embodied within platform cooperativism, shifting the burdens of authority and legitimacy to economic organisations and actors. Emonie expressed her goal was to finish building Honeycomb and then transfer ownership to sex workers. She discussed "productive conversations" with Assembly Four, as they've already set up a directory for sex workers called Tryst which offers an alternative full-service booking system. This has made them international criminals and they can't leave Australia, so "they're fully committed" and could be a good fit to take on Honeycomb's governance.

I asked ESWA director Sabrina Sanchez if they'd be interested in governing a platform cooperative like Honeycomb or Horizontl:

> Sabrina: We'd need to discuss how the platform would look like organisationally, but I'm sure that ESWA can be useful for bringing together and facilitating infrastructure. We can think about the online tools that could be adopted, and we may have the budget to do it…. Platforms owned and administrated by sex workers, that don't take advantage of us, are really needed.

Following this positive discussion, I set up a meeting with ESWA and Emonie, who conducted a demo of Honeycomb. Yigit explained how ESWA's organisational structure already aligns with a PC model, while Sabrina considers how Honeycomb could be supported:

> Yigit: What you're offering is really similar to ESWA's government style. We have a board of directors who are chosen and elected by our membership, who are sex worker-led organisations. So, they vote for board members, board members are elected, and they make the decisions. Then we have a General Assembly that we hold every year where all the members come together and discuss the matters that are relevant to ESWA's future. We have this structure in the team as well. Thanks to Sabrina's very nice energy we manage to maintain horizontality. So, there's lots that we can help with. I'm super interested, and we can talk about how we can work together. We can talk with the team and board as well. The idea that an organisation could manage a platform is something new to me… So, that's something to think about.

> Sabrina: Current platforms aren't good and the worst of them is AdultWork. I've been thinking we must have something like this made for us by us. I love how you've developed it {Emonie}. My work is thinking about the problems legally and how to solve them, as we are registered as a non-profit… we could make a call to membership expressing this is in the making and

> asking who is interested in being a part of the board and moving their content to a new platform… I just don't know if ESWA can legally take it on. We can support the project and pay the expenses and time of the people dedicated to it. Or it could be registered legally like an association foundation, that we collaborate on.

ESWA's democratic, grassroots governance model, where the board is elected by members, already aligns with PC principles. Moreover, ESWA can enable the reappropriation of network effects for bottom-up empowerment by drawing on international membership ties. ESWA already unites a broad network of sex worker advocacy groups across Europe and Asia, providing a strong foundation to build on. Sabrina noted they can use this to boost visibility, encourage membership, and collaborate with other movements, to promote participation and citizen assemblies. Once Honeycomb launches, they could help organise boycotts of exploitative platforms. If workers collectively withdrew their networks, this could seriously undermine adult platforms' monopoly power.

Practical barriers include legal considerations associated with ESWA's non-profit status and maintaining member participation. Emonie explains some workers disengaged with Honeycomb after leaving the industry, while others simply dropped out. This could partly relate to the fact that Honeycomb is not yet an operating business. Sex worker organisations like ESWA could help sustain engagement by drawing on their well-established mobilising practices.

Emonie outlines how the developmental governance of Honeycomb currently operates:

> Emonie: We use an open-source decision making platform. Our initial organisational structuring over Loomio had tons of proposals, votes and discussions. There are volunteers who will be filling roles that will eventually become payrolls… Right now, the volunteers govern themselves independently and decisions are ultimately made by the creators. However, they can empower committees to make decisions on their behalf – we have

> a Development Committee, Design Committee and the Community Committee that moderates the discord.

Emonie illuminates how the governance of a sex work PC might be structured, with various subcommittees democratically elected. Her discussion of open-source software, such as Loomio, touches on another essential element of anti-work polity.

The process of democratising the economy can also involve delegitimising Big-Tech cloud computing. This ecosystem operates through autocratic means, digital rentier dynamics and monopoly power. In contrast, open-source software is typically collaboratively developed and freely available for modification. Having emerged from the 2012 Occupy movement, the Loomio cooperative challenges vertical power structures by reclaiming the digital commons from corporate control (Jackson & Kuehn, 2016). This offers self-valorisation through autonomous and participatory innovation. It's revenue model depends on charity-based investment, paid consulting work and optional payment plans to access the service (ibid). This refusal of traditional funding models is a conscious effort to bypass venture capital, as profit-imperatives would jeopardise core values. Loomio also explicitly refuses to engage in datafication practices.

However, Loomio is still enclosed by capitalist markets (Jackson & Kuehn, 2016). While they can make internal decisions about ownership and governance, they remain dependent on the broader platform ecosystem. Loomio's reliance on private servers and third-party services highlights how privatisation compromises collective autonomy. This general critique of PCs does not mean that transformation is impossible. Autonomist Marxist's stress that attempts to create autonomous spaces are always marked by capital's influence, mirroring how capitalism carries remnants of feudalism (Cleaver, 1992).

Such techno-socialist transformation would involve reclaiming control over global digital infrastructure and services. Workers' unions, platform cooperatives and states could collaborate to democratise web 2.0, including its cloud platforms,

marketplaces, social media and financial services. This global effort would shift legitimacy to public goods. This could enable platform co-ops like Honeycomb to build outside capitalist enclosure. Privacy and data security should be treated as public goods, not commodities (Jackson & Kuehn, 2016). An open-source cooperative economy is not a utopian dream, as such platforms already exist.

Collective digital trans-nationalisation also removes platform-scalability from the venture capital gained through ownership of this infrastructure. This involves subsuming the 'good life' ideology of Silicon Valley into moral legitimacy of good actors, practices and infrastructure. This emerged in the discourse of Kate Flemming:

> Kate: The thing that makes the Internet amazing is its scale; you can connect with people anywhere. Before, business opportunity was constrained either very locally or by dependency on overlords who have the global networks… now the internet lets anyone connect… I want to figure out how to create access to that in a way that isn't exploitative. I'm much more interested in thinking about digital public goods. That's the term that gets used sometimes on open source, like software as infrastructure and public service, where it has scale, but it is interoperable, it does allow collaboration … tech infrastructure doesn't really work under the coop structure. So, I'm interested in building an infrastructure layer for sex workers which anyone can build on... You can build a local agency. You could build a local advertising site. You could build all kinds of local things anywhere on what is this core infrastructure that's around privacy and contracts and payments that can be picked up and integrated into any system. Then a local cohort of sex workers can start a business that can be interoperable with all these other cooperatives anywhere. That local capability is a good use of cooperatives. Cooperatives emerge from the Industrial age - they're tied to place; they're tied to production in a sense… So, this is a system where it's recognising that most people are good actors. So how do we start to centre and incentivise good behaviour and good actors and marginalise bad actors, because right now it's like the bad apples that spoiled the barrel.

As Kate notes, cooperatives need local success and collectivisation, alongside global interoperability to work. This involves platform-scalability through transnational ownership of this infrastructure and subsumption of capital into workers' hands. Silicon Valley could face a reckoning of moral illegitimacy if bad actors, bad practices and bad infrastructure enter cultural and political dialogue. Kate was also referring to ethical consumption of sex work, a process dependent on a shift towards labour protections and away from criminalising digital legislation.

Kate indicates a successful sex work PC must empower local communities, within a wider democratic and replicable ecosystem. Indeed, part of a sex work PCs ability to scale involves harnessing the grassroots organisation and mutual aid networks within this community. Emonie suggests another way of simultaneously building community, reclaiming infrastructure and scaling PCs:

> Emonie: There will be the platform fee, but we could also have an additional fee which is like a grant that can go towards funding other platform cooperatives. This means people who are exiting the community will have this grant fund that they can draw upon to start this business model in their local communities.

By creating seed funding for other coops, Emonie seeks to challenge venture-scalability. This draws on some of the scaling practices adopted by Loomio, such as optional membership fees. Honeycomb could also offer consultancy services through their grant funds for other PC startups. Emonie wants Honeycomb to create community between creators, like local photographers and videographers to increase the production value of workers' content. Honeycomb does this by allowing creators to split price exchange for content between themselves and/or other creative workers like photographers. This expands the cooperatives reach into other industry sectors, while potentially boosting the PC's scalability through network effects.

As Kate Fleming noted, traditional venture capital models often constrain innovation by prioritising profit maximisation over community-focused initiatives. In

contrast, PCs can create alternative funding models, such as member contributions, community fundraising, or partnerships with like-minded organisations. Moreover, without the pressure to deliver immediate returns to external investors, PCs can prioritise long-term sustainability and social impact. This shift allows cultivation of network effects that are rooted in participatory community engagement, reflecting Scholz (2023) call for methods of scaling 'up,' 'out' and 'deep' by replicating/collaborating globally and nurturing through innovation and value for stakeholders. In so doing, we can begin to reimagine the autocratic foundations of platform capitalism.

Conclusion

This report has argued that the sex workers' movement is radically positioned to lead a counter-hegemonic challenge to platform capitalism. Anti-work psyche uses alienation as catalyst for oppositional consciousness and innovation. Clinical trials could attract funding to evaluate platform cooperatives as public health interventions, with Fairwork benchmarking principles and NUM services adopted to validate harm reduction. Anti-work praxis can be rooted in the reappropriation of data infrastructure, to delegitimise processes of valorisation. Sex tech innovators are leading this shift, demanding privacy, autonomy and ownership. Kate is building privacy-focused full-stack online identity innovation to protect user privacy on Horizontl, while Emonie is exploring end-to-end encryption on Honeycomb. Worker-owned social networks enable solidarity, alongside reduction of unwaged social media labour. Image Angel can be integrated into a PC to prevent image-based sexual abuse, offering radical Xenofeminist praxis. Anti-work polity reclaims network effects and venture scalability to enhance collective autonomy. ESWA's democratic model could mobilise international networks to undermine platform monopolies. While legal and engagement challenges remain, their well-established grassroots structure offers a foundation for sustained worker participation. Innovators like Emonie and Kate envision cooperative scaling through community funding and fostering both local and global collaboration. Regulatory frameworks can be reimagined to actively support sex work cooperatives by recognising their contributions to society. Policies that decriminalise sex work not

only protect workers from stigma and poverty, but could create an environment where cooperatives can flourish without fear of legal repercussions.

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